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ABSTRACT

Based on observations of all Title I reading teachers participating in the Program for Optional Assignment in District 20K, Brooklyn, New York, this report summarizes the program's policies, practices, and student achievement results. The program proposal called for assigning special reading teachers to work with second through ninth grade students, with 204 students in four schools ultimately served. The basic purpose of the program was to raise the reading achievement level of these Optional Assignment students by means of individualized and small group instruction. Requirements for student admission included economic disadvantage, residence in a Title I area, and a need for reading remediation. The principal feature of the program was a diagnostic/prescriptive approach to reading instruction based on individual needs. Teachers were well prepared and kept careful records on student progress. Space and equipment used by the program were adequate, though it is recommended that full size classrooms be found for the future, especially at the junior high school level. Measurement instruments utilized included the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (for second graders), the Stanford Reading Test, and a number of other diagnostic tests. Pre and post mean achievement data indicate highly positive gains at all grade levels. (Author/GC)

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

1978-79

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 20K

READING PROGRAM FOR OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT

TITLE I - 5071-91627

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CG020554

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Program for Optional Assignment Children #71-9-1627

Introduction

I have observed all of the Title I reading teachers in the district who have participated in the Program for Optional Assignment Children. Although some of the policies and practices in the programs located in the four schools vary to some extent, I feel that an overall summary of the basic thrust of the programs as well as some of the significant deviations from this thrust can be made in a relatively few pages. An attempt will be made to describe the programs and my reactions to, and analysis of, the programs under three major headings, namely, Process Evaluation, Summative Evaluation, and Recommendations. The outline of the evaluation report will be as follows:

I. Process Evaluation
   1. Proposal Description
   2. Teacher and Student Assignments
   3. Sessions for Teachers
   4. Sessions for Students
   5. Criteria for Program Admission for Students
   6. Basis for Groups
   7. Program
   8. In-Service Program and Technical Services
   9. Testing Program
   10. Space, Supplies, and Equipment

II. Summative Evaluation

III. Comment

IV. Recommendations

I. Process Evaluation

1. Program Description

The program proposal called for assigning special reading teachers to work with 288 second through ninth grade Optional Assignment students in small groups in five of the district's elementary and junior high schools. There were to be full-time reading teachers in the two target elementary schools and the three target junior high schools.

The pupils to be serviced by this program were to be second through ninth graders who were residents in a Title I attendance area who had elected to attend schools in District 20 under the Optional Assignment Plan. Furthermore, they were to be pupils "who have been identified as being in need of remediation."

The basic purpose of the program was to raise the reading achievement levels of the Optional Assignment students by means of individualized and small group instruction based upon an intensive diagnostic testing program designed to isolate specific reading disabilities for the purpose of prescriptive remediation.

The organization of the reading delivery system was to feature "individualized and small group instruction" and "a sequential program stressing phonetic and structural skills, and using materials appropriate to the group in terms of content, interest and grade level." The program was also to include language experience activities.

"In addition to the reinforcement of skills in decoding, vocabulary and comprehension, emphasis was to be placed on guided use of reading." The reading specialists were to maintain contact with the classroom teachers, so that there could be meaningful follow-up of the activities carried out in the Optional Assignment reading program.

The Title I service was to be provided as an addition to and not a substitute for the regular tax levy reading program. The participating students were to receive these services five times a week in instructional groups of approximately seven students.

The coordinator of the program was to conduct periodic meetings with the Optional Assignment reading specialists for the purpose of providing a consistent philosophy and a coherent and articulated program throughout the district.

The evaluation design proposed for determining the efficacy of the program was to employ pre and post test scores obtained by the students in October, 1978 and May, 1979 respectively on the Stanford Reading Test.

2. Teacher and Student Assignments

With but one exception, the reading specialists were assigned to the schools in precisely the manner described in the proposal. The one exception involved eliminating one of the elementary schools from the program because of an insufficient number of Optional Assignment students. Consequently, the program was carried out in one elementary school and three junior high schools.

The original program proposal called for the servicing of 288 second through ninth Optional Assignment students. On the basis of an examination of the pre and post test roster sheets, it would appear that the program actually serviced 204 second through ninth grade Optional Assignment students.

3. Sessions for Teachers

All four reading teachers conducted five daily class sessions of between 40 and 45 minutes.

4. Sessions for Students

In all four participating schools, the number of weekly sessions for students in the Optional Assignment Program was five.

The size of the class groups with which the teachers worked varied, with the average group size ranging from about six to twelve at the one elementary school, and about eight to fourteen in the three junior high schools.

5. Criteria for Program Admission for Students

In addition to the usual requirements of economic disadvantage and residency in a Title I attendance area, an educational attainment criterion was also included as a pre-requisite for admission to the program. The students admitted to the program were to have been identified as being in need of remediation. Analysis of the pre test scores indicated that the vast majority of students in the program were well below grade level.

6. Basis for Groups

In all of the Optional Assignment Program Schools, one of two factors determined student assignment to a particular group. The two factors were regular class assignment and perceived level of functioning in reading. At the elementary school level, the teachers usually formed a group from the same one or two homeroom classes, thereby reducing conflict with the regular program (gym, etc). At the junior high school level, the reading teacher would usually take a number of students from the higher exponent classes at a particular grade level.

7. Program

The basic feature of the Optional Assignment Program was to be a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to reading instruction. Every teacher in the program had completed a diagnosis of each child's reading difficulty. In general, the diagnoses were quite comprehensive and sophisticated. The prescriptive learning activities for the pupils were, by and large, based on their individual needs and did appear to be appropriate in terms of reading level and content.

The teachers reinforced success. Virtually all of the teachers utilized positive reinforcement extensively and, in general, enjoyed fine rapport with the students. In general, the teachers exercised good classroom control. Every teacher in the program was well prepared and all seemed committed to the program.

Pupil progress was monitored continually, and each student had a work folder. Each teacher maintained a folder on each child containing the various diagnoses and prescriptions for the students, as well as a listing of the materials used in the various prescriptions. The program was sequential and did stress phonetic and structural skills and did employ materials which were appropriate in terms of content, interest and grade level.

Language experience activities were observed, particularly at the junior high school level. This aspect of the proposal, however, was usually more limited at the elementary school level.

Two areas in which marked differences occurred among the participating schools were the degree of emphasis placed on guided independent reading and contact with classroom teachers. The extent of emphasis placed on guided independent use of reading varied markedly from school to school. There was much more emphasis on this particular aspect of reading at the junior high school level than at the elementary school level. The extent of contact between the Optional Assignment teacher and the regular classroom teacher also varied markedly from school to school. In some schools, the contact was extensive, and in others quite limited.

8. <u>In-Service Program and Technical Services</u>

The reading coordinator has conducted monthly meetings with the reading teachers. The topics covered in each of these meetings are presented in the Appendix A. In addition,

the coordinator has made periodic visits to the schools to assist the teachers in the program. The feed-back from the reading teachers concerning the meetings, the in-service course, and the technical assistance provided by the coordinator, has all been very favorable.

9. Testing Program

The Stanford Reading Test was administered on a pre-post test basis in October, 1978 and May, 1979 for all third* through ninth grade students who were enrolled in the program in September. All of the teachers used a combination of other tests in addition to those mentioned above in order to arrive at a more precise diagnosis. A good number of the teachers relied heavily on the Botel Inventory, Gilmore Oral Reading, The Indiana, The Slossom Oral Reading and informal tests.

10. Space, Supplies, and Equipment

At the one elementary school, the Optional Assignment reading teacher was located in a full size classroom. The reading classroom in the elementary building was attractively and appropriately decorated.

At the junior high levels, two of the three reading centers were located in rooms that were less than half the size of the regular classroom.

Supplies and equipment have been purchased for the program, and in every reading center the supplies and equipment have been varied, appropriate, and more than

* Second grade students were administered the Stanford Early School Achievement Test.

adequate. Fortunately, during the last two school years, there seems to have been a marked increase in the purchase of supplies and equipment for the program.

II. Summative Evaluation

The data necessary for ascertaining whether the Optional Assignment program was successful is presented in Table I for all of the students who completed the pre and post test in October, 1978 and May, 1979 respectively. Table I incorporates a historical regression analysis which compares the student's actual growth in reading with the growth that would have been anticipated on the basis of his or her reading growth prior to entrance into the Optional Assignment Program.

TABLE I

Optional Assignment Reading Achievement Profile
from
October, 1978 to May, 1979

Gr.	n	Pre	Pred.	Post	Pre Act.	Pre Pred.	Ratio	t	P
2*	14	1.36	1.59	2.71	13.5	2.3	5.87	4.02	.01
3	17	2.45	2.93	3.09	6.4	4.8	1.33	.68	N.S.
4	11	2.75	3.15	3.35	6.0	4.0	1.50	.67	N.S.
5	8	3.94	4.44	4.58	6.4	5.0	1.28	.29	N.S.
7	62	4.74	5.17	6.27	15.3	4.3	3.56	7.13	.01
8	26	5.12	5.53	5.98	8.6	4.1	2.10	3.47	.01
9	35	5.92	6.35	6.83	9.1	4.3	2.12	3.89	.01
Total	159**	4.64	5.07	5.68	10.4	4.3	2.42	6.04	.01

* The second graders were tested on the aural comprehension subtest of the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, while the students in all the other grades were tested on the comprehension section of the Stanford Achievement Test.

** Since the second graders were tested on a different test, the total only reflects grades 3 through 9.

Analysis of the data in Table I indicated that in the seven month period between the pre and post test administration of the Stanford Reading Test, the mean overall growth in grade equivalent scores in reading was 10.4 months.

The mean difference in pre-post growth varied in the grades from a low of 6 months at the fourth grade level to a high of a little over a year and a half at the seventh grade level.

Further analysis of the data in Table I revealed that the overall mean difference between the predicted and actual post test reading scores favored the actual post test mean by 6.1 months. The ratio of actual to predicted post test scores varied in the grades from 1.28 at the fifth grade level to 5.87 at the second grade level. Overall, the ratio of actual to predicted scores was 2.42.* Furthermore, in four of the seven grades, the students averaged over a month's growth in reading for every month in the program.

III. Comment

The mean findings for the students who were in the program in its entirety were all highly positive and very encouraging at every grade level. In general, the students registered gains which were approximately two and a half times greater than those that would have been anticipated on the basis of the student's performance prior to entrance

* This figure did not include the second grade results.

into the program. These results confirm the very positive process evaluation.

IV. Recommendations

1. A genuine attempt should be made to locate the reading centers in full-size classrooms, particularly at the junior high school level.
2. In view of the fact that the actual achievement growth is two and a half times as great as the predicted achievement growth, this program should be recycled.

APPENDIX A

STAFF TRAINING SCHEDULE

Month	Subject
September, 1978	Orientation and Implementation of Program Goals and Objectives and Pupil Selection
October, 1978	Pre-Test Administration, Initial Problems Encountered, Diagnosis and Materials Needed
November, 1978	Test Results (Pre-Testing)
December, 1978	Diagnostic, Prescriptive Approaches
January, 1979	Use of Materials for Achieving Instructional and Program Objectives
February, 1979	Workshops and Demonstrations of Teacher-Developed Materials
March, 1979	Small Group and Individual Instructional Techniques and Methods-Demonstration
April, 1979	Parental Involvement and Communications with Tax Levy Staff
May, 1979	Post-Test Administration and Review of Program Implementation
June, 1979	Overview and Recommendations of Program for Following Year